



Navy Suicide Prevention

SEVEN EVERYDAY WAYS TO PROMOTE SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS

Suicide Prevention in the Navy is an *all hands evolution, all the time*. While September is nationally recognized as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, the effort to promote *Lives Worth Living* is ongoing. Here are seven actions that individuals, families, work centers or commands can take to prevent suicide at any time of year.

1. YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE—PASS IT ON!

Small seeds of hope or a sense of purpose and belonging can grow to form the threads that sustain us through tough times. Let *three* people in your life (family, friends, shipmates, coworkers) know that they make a difference to you. Be specific about how and why you appreciate who they are and what they do to make a difference in your life. Ask that they pass it on by honoring three people in their lives this way. To see a real life example of this process in action see www.blueribbonmovie.com.

2. RUN A FIRE DRILL!

While most of us don't expect to be in a fire, we go through drills for emergency preparedness. If we ever need it, we know the escape routes—even if they are hard to see because of smoke or darkness. Consider what you would do in times of personal crisis, or in assisting someone else, and run a drill to practice your plan. Saying "I am so upset, I am thinking of hurting myself," or asking "Are you feeling overwhelmed and unable to navigate through your stress?" may feel awkward during a practice drill. However, this practice helps ensure that you can respond quickly and efficiently during a real crisis. Know when to speak up. And know when to ACT!

FOR INDIVIDUALS: Practice how you'll ACT in a crisis with a small group or partner

ASK if someone is thinking of suicide.

CARE – Listen, offer hope, don't judge.

TREAT – Take action, don't leave the person alone, get assistance.

FOR COMMANDS: Update and test your crisis response plan. Have someone call the duty office and have the duty section practice going through their plan to talk, gather information and access support. Practice your plan to assist someone onboard who is at acute risk. Check your safety considerations. Update the recall roster. The [Commanding Officer's Tool Kit for Suicide Prevention](#) is a useful resource for tailoring strategies specific to your command's needs.

Front Line Supervisor Training is also available for deckplate leaders. This suicide prevention course is a unique opportunity to discuss and role-play some realistic scenarios while practicing your communication and intervention skills.

For emergency responders or medical commands, run a drill to practice your protocols for suicide risk, response and de-escalation.

3. DO A SELF-ASSESSMENT

Stress affects us all and health problems like sleep difficulties, depression and anxiety are extremely common. Did you know that 1 in 5 people will experience at least one episode of major depression in their lifetime? Wear and tear or illness can creep up on us slowly—we don't feel normal, but don't understand that anything is wrong

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Life is worth living
Ask Care Treat

until it really takes a toll. Take a moment to check-up on yourself or your Command. If you can recognize a concern early, there are many resources available to address this distress before it negatively impacts work performance, morale, relationships and/or health.

FOR INDIVIDUALS: www.militarymentalhealth.org leads to an *anonymous* online self-assessment tool for stress related issues.

FOR COMMANDS: Go through the checklist in [OPNAVINST 1720.4A](#) and see how your command is doing in implementing suicide prevention strategies.

4. CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

Suicide affects every state, community and demographic group. In the Navy, suicide prevention is an *all hands evolution, all of the time*. This includes not only our shipmates and deckplate leaders, but members of our personal communities as well.

There are many organizations with outreach opportunities in your own community, with ideas and links to local activities. Stay engaged through various state, community and youth-specific activities.

American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org

Suicide Prevention Resource Counsel: www.sprc.org

5. ENGAGE IN FELLOWSHIP, MEDITATION OR PRAYER

While honoring your beliefs, work with your local chaplain, faith group or friends to hold a breakfast or lunch discussing suicide awareness (warning signs, risk and protective factors). Set aside time for meditation or prayer on behalf of those struggling with a personal crisis that may not feel as though they have the ability or desire to navigate through those challenges. Or, hold a prayer vigil having groups of people agree to congregate during a specific time.

6. GOOD GRIEF

Surveys show that upwards of half of our personnel knew someone personally who died by suicide. The pain caused by suicide loss doesn't heal quickly—some studies estimate that the effects of suicide on a family last for generations. However, there are several resources that can help provide hope for survivors. If you are grieving a loss (or did not allow yourself to grieve an earlier loss to suicide), take time to sort things out to facilitate the healing process. It's never too late to heal.

There are many books, DVDs and resources for working through grief. Your local chaplain or Fleet and Family Support Center can assist and make recommendations. For survivors of any military casualty:

TAPS—Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors: TAPS is the 24/7 tragedy assistance resource for ANYONE who has suffered the loss of a military loved one, regardless of the relationship to the deceased or the circumstance of the death: www.taps.org or 800-959-TAPS

7. SHARE YOUR STORY

You are not alone. If you have overcome a personal crisis, we invite you to email us your story so that you can help provide hope to others. Identities will remain confidential and stories may be selected for inclusion within Suicide Prevention Program publications. Please share your experiences at suicideprevention@navy.mil.